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Ending Nuclear Terrorism: by America and Others

Long after the ending of the Cold War, the chance that some nuclear weapons will kill masses of innocent humans somewhere, before very long, may well be higher than it was before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

One phase of the Nuclear Age, the period of superpower arms race and confrontation, has indeed come to a close (though the possibility of all-out, omnicidal exchange of alert forces triggered by a false alarm remains, inexcusably, well above zero). But another dangerous phase now looms, the era of nuclear proliferation and with it, an increased likelihood of regional nuclear wars, accidents, and nuclear terrorism.

And the latter prospect is posed not just by "rogue" states or sub-state terrorists but by the United States, which has both led by example for sixty years of making nuclear first-use threats that amount to terrorism and may well be the first or among the first to carry out such threats.

Averting catastrophe—not only the spread of weapons but their lethal use—will require major shifts in attitude and policy in every one of the nuclear weapon states, declared and undeclared. But such change is undoubtedly most needed, and must come first, in the United States and Russia. Despite important and creditable moves, both unilateral and negotiated, since 1991 to reverse their bilateral arms race, and piecemeal measures to restrain proliferation, none of their initiatives and proposals has shown a decisive shift away from cold war notions of the broad functions of and requirements for nuclear weapons in "superpower" arsenals.

Neither country has adopted—even as a goal—a nuclear posture that is remotely appropriate, let alone adequate, to discourage proliferation effectively. On the contrary, as in the past, their joint declaratory position against proliferation is at odds with their operational doctrines and nuclear weapons programs which continue, on balance, to stimulate the spread and possible use of nuclear weapons. And that is true of all the declared nuclear powers, which not coincidentally make up the permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

With each month and year that these states maintain large nuclear arsenals, postpone ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and sustain nuclear policies that suggest that such weapons convey major-power status and are useful for political and military purposes, other nations can only conclude that acquiring and in some circumstances using nuclear weapons may well be in their national interest.

U.S. Nuclear Policies Encouraging Proliferation

Looking specifically at the United States, a whole set of policies persist that have long tended to *encourage* proliferation. These have included long-term selective blindness and tolerance for some covert nuclear weapons programs, Israel's in particular, but also in India, South Africa, Pakistan, and in earlier periods, Iran and Iraq.

Moreover, the United States maintains a massive nuclear arsenal after the end of the Cold War, resists radical cuts, and insists on its right, and that of its NATO allies, to threaten or implement initiation of nuclear attack ("first-use") against non-nuclear challenges.

Beyond this, US policies continue to endorse the notion that the relative size of nuclear arsenals is an essential badge of status. Just like their predecessors—and with the support of most elite opinion-makers and mainstream arms control analysts—the Clinton and the two Bush administrations have declared themselves resolved to maintain nuclear superpower standing, insisting on a US arsenal that will remain for the foreseeable future an order of magnitude larger than all others apart from Russia, and that is projected to remain "Number One" in the world indefinitely.

The need for US nuclear "superiority" goes unquestioned, while these same administrations along with members of Congress and editorial-writers lecture potential "rogues" among the non-nuclear-weapon states on the anachronism of their fantasy that having some nuclear weapons rather than none will confer on them any prestige, status or influence.

All these expressions of nuclear policy—what we do, and what we say to ourselves, as opposed to what we say others should do—especially in the absence now of any serious military threats to US national security, can only encourage potential nuclear states to regard nuclear weapons in the same way that the United States and its major allies, along with Russia, evidently do: as having vital, multiple, legitimate uses, as well as being unparalleled symbols of sovereignty, status, and power.

Perhaps most dangerously, such potential proliferators are led by past and present American doctrine and behavior to consider—among the possible, acceptable and valuable uses of nuclear weapons—the issuance and possible execution of nuclear first-use threats: i.e., the "option" of threatening to initiate nuclear attacks, and if necessary of carrying out such threats.

The threat of first-use (against a country without nuclear weapons) is intentionally implicit in the repeated statements of President Bush and Secretary of State Rice over the last year, echoed by leading members of Congress, that "all options are on the table" with respect to preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Such threats have the perverse effect of challenging other states, including Iran itself, to acquire nuclear capabilities of their own, perhaps stimulating a regional nuclear arms race—mimicking

past superpower folly—to be able likewise to threaten, to deter or to preempt nuclear attack.

Years after the former members of the Warsaw Pact, including Russia, began asking to be admitted to NATO, and after China has acquired most-favored-nation status, the United States still refuses to adopt a policy of "no-first-use." This means that the United States refuses to make a commitment to never under any circumstance initiate a nuclear attack. This is also true of Britain, France and now Russia, which abandoned its no-first-use doctrine in late 1993, citing the United States-NATO example and reasoning in doing so.

This is not only a matter of words, as some suppose. Despite sensible moves on both sides beginning in late 1991 to remove tactical nuclear weapons from the surface navy and from ground units—responding to realistic fears in both leaderships of "loose nukes" in the Soviet Union—both states continue to deploy sizeable numbers of tactical weapons on air bases and still larger numbers in reserve storage. Virtually all of these weapons are vulnerable to nuclear attack. Thus, they are weapons *only* for first-use or for use against non-nuclear opponents.

So long as these continue to be components of the nuclear arsenals of both the United States and Russia, even after their own overarching confrontation has ended, there is simply no logical argument for denying either the legitimacy or reasonableness of nuclear arsenals sized and shaped to the same ends in other countries. This is especially true for countries such as Pakistan and Israel, who face regional opponents with much larger conventional forces. This, after all, was the historic rationale for NATO's reliance on first-use nuclear threats.

In May 1990, a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir was plausibly feared by US officials, and little has happened since to reduce the prospect of a recurrence. But neither then nor later was the United States in a position to invoke an internationally-accepted norm against Pakistan's tacit first-use threats, since Pakistan was so clearly imitating US and NATO behavior.

U.S. Nuclear Weapons Use

Later in 1990, after Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait, not one of the four nuclear states militarily arrayed against Iraq in the Gulf War—the United States, Britain, France and Israel—refrained from tacit threats to initiate nuclear attacks under some circumstances. Under public questioning, high US and other Allied officials—including Vice President Quayle, Secretary of Defense Cheney and General Schwarzkopf—pointedly refused to rule out the possible first-use of nuclear weapons against Iraq: in particular, if the Iraqis used chemical weapons extensively, which was regarded as highly possible. Thus, nuclear weapons *were used* as a threat against a non-nuclear opponent during the Gulf War.

By the same token, contrary to the belief of most Americans that US nuclear weapons have never been used in the fifty years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, American

Presidents have employed nuclear threats over a dozen times, generally in secret from the US public, in crises and limited wars in Indochina, East Asia, Berlin, Cuba and the Middle East. [1] The Soviet Union, Israel, and Pakistan have used nuclear weapons in the same way.

In each of these cases, nuclear weapons were *used* in the exact sense in which a gun is used when it is pointed at someone's head in a confrontation, whether or not the trigger is pulled. To get one's way without having to pull the trigger is a major reason for acquiring the gun and, often, for brandishing it.

Some of these nuclear threats were probably bluffs, some probably not. Most were ambiguous, some were rejected, some were believed to be successful, including those in the Gulf War. But all of them involved real dangers, short-run or long, to some degree for both sides; intimidation on this scale is never without mutual risk.

One of the successes, the Pentagon concluded, was the Gulf War. Saddam Hussein did not, after all, use the chemical weapons he then possessed—some on alert missiles--either against Allied troops or against Israel. Fear of Israeli nuclear reprisal may have been an especially effective deterrent. But this success, if true, came at a high price. The message that the United States and its allies regarded such threats both as legitimate and as successful was not lost on potential proliferators, who could imagine themselves either as receiving or as imitating such threats themselves in the future.

Yet another spur to proliferation was the accompanying thought, among Third World observers, that Iraq might have been spared both these nuclear threats and the heavy conventional bombing it received if Saddam Hussein's efforts to acquire a nuclear weapon had already been successful. That inference became inescapable after 2003, with the dramatic difference in the US responses to a supposed nuclear weapons program in Iraq and an actual successful one in North Korea. (A conventional or nuclear US attack in the near future on a yet-non-nuclear Iran would underline that point once again for the rest of the world).

And once proliferation has occurred, new nuclear states are likely to use the same ambiguous first-use threats, in the same ways and with the same risks of provocation, commitment, and of possible failure and escalation.

This observation rejects the common, condescending implication that significant risk of nuclear war will emerge for the first time only with the acquisition of nuclear weapons by "irresponsible, immature" leaders in the Third World. But it also presumes that the risk of nuclear war has been higher over the last sixty years than the world public was allowed to learn.

[1] [1] See Daniel Ellsberg, "Call to Mutiny," Introduction to Protest and Survive, ed. E.P. Thompson and Dan Smith (Monthly Review Press, 1981): http://www.ellsberg.net/content/view/16/32/
For a more recent list of threats, see "U.S. Nuclear threats: Then and now," Robert S. Norris and Hans M Kristensen, Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, September/October 200, pp. 69-71: http://www.thebulletin.org/print_nn.php?art_ofn=so06norris

With nuclear weapons in the hands of a greater number of leaders, individually no more but *no less* reckless than most American presidents of the last sixty years, the long-term risk of nuclear explosions launched by nuclear weapons states is higher still. There is no basis here for limiting the danger of such attacks exclusively to non-state, "terrorist" groups. The latter real and growing danger must be seen not as replacing but as adding to (and being enhanced by) the dangers of existing and broadened possession of nuclear weapons by states, led by our own.

Failure to Make Nuclear Disarmament Irreversible

Equally foolish and dangerous is the failure of the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations to require Russian commitment—at the price of reciprocal American commitment--to immediate deactivation of strategic weapons to be dismantled under arms control agreements; and to the dismantling, under reciprocal, bilateral controls, of warheads as well as vehicles; and to international control of all the fissile material from these warheads. Only such a combination of measures could lock in the reductions verifiably and irreversibly. Yet these administrations have hung back from proposing, let alone demanding, such bilateral commitments at the cost of US freedom of action to maintain huge stockpiles of warheads and material "in reserve."

There isn't any national security rationale, or any excuse, for US failure to press Russian leaders now, and on every occasion, to commit Russia to reduce *and dismantle* its nuclear forces, both strategic and tactical, as far and as fast as they can be induced to go on a mutual and reciprocal basis. Yet because of reluctance to cut our own forces as deeply as Yeltsin, for one, actually proposed—down to 2000 in 1992, and reportedly to 1000 in 1994—high-level officials under Clinton as under George H.W. Bush bargained Yeltsin *up* in terms of joint levels of strategic forces to be negotiated.

The present administration of George W. Bush has actually announced that the most recent agreed reduction schedule—down to 1700-2200 "operationally deployable" warheads by December 2012 with no provision for destruction of warheads or missiles or for detailed verification, and with many thousands each in reserve[2]—is to be the last they envision negotiating.

The risks of such fecklessness are incalculable. The unprecedented opportunities that emerged in late 1991 (or even earlier, under Gorbachev) for reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons and for changing long-standing Cold War policies were and are obviously subject to continuous erosion and challenge. Warnings by Secretary of Defense Cheney at that time—reiterated by Secretary Perry and then by Secretaries Rumsfeld and Gates--that the Russian future is highly uncertain are self-evidently realistic. (Likewise, arms policies in China). But the conclusions they have all drawn from this, serving to

[2] Joseph Cirincione, *Bomb Scare* (New York, 2007), p. 42.

preserve swollen defense budgets and nuclear arsenals on both sides, seem perversely implausible.

It is true that there is a continuing danger of a shift to a more authoritarian, militarist regime within Russia, which would close down such opportunity as still might be nurtured for greatly increased trust and cooperation, openness to international inspection, and reductions in arms. (This may, or may not, already have happened under Putin, but the contrary possibility has scarcely been explored by the U.S.)

But that is precisely why reciprocal commitments to inspection and disarmament should have been sought urgently throughout this period, and at present. No matter how fascistic its future or even present leadership might become, Russian need for credits and trade would make its leaders extremely reluctant to disavow formal undertakings that had been ratified. The logic of these ominous uncertainties points in exactly the opposite direction from maintaining insanely high levels of nuclear weaponry in Russian, along with American, hands.

Nuclear Insanity

"Insane" is not too strong a word for arguments that occupy planners in the Pentagon and otherwise-serious arms control analysts in favor of maintaining thousands of thermonuclear warheads in the US arsenal—hence thousands in Russia—in a world where neither any longer has a superpower adversary. After two generations of a strategic nuclear arms race that was the clearest example in human history of a social process psychotically divorced from reality or an urge to survive, such advisors have clearly lost any conception of what a nuclear bomb is or does.

They have forgotten, if they ever knew, that pictures of Nagasaki in the late summer of 1945 show what happens to a medium-sized city when just the detonator to a modern, thermonuclear weapon is exploded in its midst. Almost no Americans are aware of the elementary fact that every thermonuclear fusion weapon, or H-bomb—which comprise all of our strategic arsenal, still over 6,000 warheads—requires a Nagasaki-type fission warhead, or A-bomb, to set it off.

The earliest thermonuclear blasts released 1,000 times the explosive power of the A-bomb detonator that triggered it, which was in turn 2,000 times more powerful than the largest "blockbuster" of World War II. The latter destroyed a city block with ten tons of TNT. The second fusion explosion, in February 1954, had a yield equivalent to 15 million tons of TNT, over seven times greater than the tonnage of all the bombs dropped by the United States in World War II, including the A-bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That single bomb—the first test of a droppable H-bomb—had greater explosive power than that of all the shells and bombs together in all the wars of human history.

It is in that unearthly light that bomb designer Herbert York, the first director of Livermore Nuclear Weapons Laboratory and later President Carter's test ban negotiator,

gave an unfamiliar but plausible answer to the Cold War question: How many survivable, deliverable nuclear warheads would it take to deter an adversary rational enough to be deterred at all? York's answer was: "Somewhere in the range of 1, 10, or 100"; and, he conjectured, "I think it is closer to 1 than it is to 100."

York also suggested another way of arriving at an upper limit for an appropriate nuclear arsenal. He proposed that we ask ourselves what is the upper limit of destructive power within a short period of time that we would want a single state, or a single individual heading that state, to control. Suppose that upper limit was the ability to inflict, in a day or two, the full scale of destruction of World War II. Surely it would be challenging to justify a capability to inflict immediate damage that was greater than that.

The criterion would imply, York calculated, an upper limit to a survivable nuclear force of about 100 thermonuclear warheads. It might be as many as 200. It would certainly not allow 1000 warheads, or 500.

Thus, even by Cold War standards of requirements for deterring nuclear attack, applied to present and foreseeable conditions: what nuclear-weapon state can really make a plausible case for possessing as many nuclear weapons as the 200 deployed by Britain or China, or the 348 deployed by France? Not France, or Britain, or China; nor the United States, nor Russia.

Even the smaller of these states continue to maintain and to expand arsenals so large as to mock intolerably the presumption of the Non-Proliferation Treaty that none of the other states of the world, the non-nuclear-weapon states, has any compelling or legitimate reason to possess even one nuclear weapon. That can be said even of India (40-50 assembled warheads), or Israel (commonly estimated at 200 warheads, but with other estimates ranging from 300-600).

Meanwhile, the United States arsenal—10,000 warheads, nearly 6000 operational—is *one hundred times* the maximum suggested by York. The Russian stockpile--16,000 warheads, over 7000 operational, is even larger. Even after reductions currently agreed under the current Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty by 2012, the operational warheads alone--1700-2200 "operationally deployable" warheads,for each (apart from the much larger number of inactive/reserve weapons "on the shelf")—will be ten to twenty times the York levels.[3]

And they will still be larger in 2013 and beyond than the arsenals that either deployed in 1968, when they signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty. By their behavior, the two nuclear superpowers have been saying to every non-nuclear-weapon state over the forty years since then: "You don't need a single nuclear weapon ever. We need thousands indefinitely."

[3] All estimates, except for Israel, from Cirincione, *op. cit.*, Table 5.5, p. 98.

By the time of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, it seemed obvious (to this writer, among many others) that this contradiction could not be sustained much longer (even though, under intense diplomatic pressure from the U.S., the non-nuclear members of the NPT did renew the Treaty indefinitely). The situation looked, and remains, unstable. At a time when fissile materials and nuclear weapons were becoming widely available, the nuclear weapons states, led by the United States and Russia, could not continue to maintain and flaunt the privileges of the nuclear "club" without membership in that club eventually expanding.

It did not take long. In retrospect, the Indian decision to test, inevitably triggering Pakistani tests, followed quickly on that NPT Conference performance by the nuclear weapons states. Before long, North Korea was the first to join them (and Israel) outside the Treaty, and proceeded to test (followed by a sudden renunciation of military threats and a willingness to negotiate by the U.S.: a sequence from which Iran, for one, may have drawn dangerous conclusions.)

The Need for an Effective International Norm and Practical Disincentives

Without an effective international norm against both acquisition and threat/use of nuclear weapons, there cannot be an adequate basis for consensual, coordinated international action to prevent such acquisition or use, including intrusive inspection "any time any place," with comprehensive sanctions against violators of the norm. But there cannot be such a norm, a true international consensus on values and obligations, so long as the current nuclear weapons states project an indefinite extension of a two-tier system in which they are subject to a different set of rules, or in effect, no rules at all.

Still less can there possibly be a universal norm against acquisition or use of nuclear weapons while a superpower, the United States, is actually engaged in using them, as at present [May, 2007] in threats against Iran.

At the same time, trying to close off all technological access to nuclear weapons will never be enough to discourage others from following America's and NATO's nuclear example. The "supply side" approach, by itself, cannot succeed in stopping proliferation.

Nor can the current threats of military preemption. In the immediate case of Iran, in the absence of a ground invasion -–of incalculable cost, length and consequences—a full-scale air assault could actually speed up, over a period of years, Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. It would replace any prospects of negotiating intense inspection and restraint of the Iranian nuclear energy program by an ininhibited, totally *uninspected* crash pursuit of nuclear weapons outside the NPT, in underground, dispersed sites.

Meanwhile, this very prospect of an eventual Iranian bomb would encourage nuclear weapons programs throughout the Middle East. This already seems to be occurring, with sudden interest in "nuclear energy" programs in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. Which of these would be subject to threats of an American preemptive attack? For that

matter, which of the more than forty states that could pursue a near-term nuclear capability with the breakdown of the NPT that would almost surely follow an American attack on Iran would be plausibly deterred by the prospect of American military preemption? Japan? Brazil (followed by Argentina)? Taiwan? South Korea?

Discouraging Iran now and in the future—by a variety of diplomatic means--from leaving the NPT, rejecting international inspection or acquiring nuclear weapons is thus extremely important. But by the same token, foregoing military assault on Iran is essential. For all the severe limitations of the existing "non-proliferation regime," which have brought us to this point, its breakdown would surely be even more dangerous. An American attack on Iran would be a fatal attack on the NPT.

More generally, there must be a successful effort to reduce the *incentives*, the demand for acquiring nuclear weapons. This must include resolving existing regional conflicts as in the Middle East and South Asia, providing effective alternatives to military means, and reducing decisively global causes of war.

Simultaneously, without further delay, there must be drastic changes in official nuclear policies of the United States and other nuclear-weapon states that now *enhance* the demand for nuclear weapons by creating incentives for proliferation or by making it seem legitimate. The nuclear-weapon states, led by the Untied States and Russia, can only adequately reduce incentives to join the club by moving convincingly toward its eventual dissolution, and meanwhile giving up decisively the discriminatory privileges of membership: freedom to test, to expand and modernize arsenals, to threaten first-use, to flaunt status differentials, to be free of international inspection and accountability.

Only in the context of normative and practical disincentives to acquire or threaten to use nuclear weapons can there be effective international collaboration in verifying and enforcing global bans on such activities. Such norms have to be universal: one set of rules for everyone.

It is urgent for the nuclear-weapon states to acknowledge the reality that they have been denying and the non-nuclear-weapon states have been proclaiming for almost forty years: that in the long run—and that time has arrived--effective non-proliferation is inescapably linked to nuclear disarmament.

It is all or none. Eventually—indeed, very shortly--either all nations forego the right to possess and threaten others with nuclear weapons or every nation will claim that right, and actual possession and use will be very widespread.

It was observed earlier that no nuclear-weapon state has ever had an appropriate posture from which to discourage proliferation. (Indeed, nearly every one has actively stimulated efforts toward proliferation in at least one neighbor or rival). A shift toward such a posture awaits fundamental changes in the present policies of all nuclear-weapon states, which must rest on a new way of thinking about nuclear weapons and weapons-usable fissile materials.

No longer can we afford to think of such permanently toxic, provocative and dangerous objects and materials as "national treasure"—as Russian officials have described Russian plutonium. We must come to see the existence of nuclear stockpiles in any country, starting with the United States and Russia, as a threatening and urgent international problem, akin to global warming and ozone depletion, or to radioactive waste (literally) that needs to be dealt with cooperatively by humanity as a whole, led by the countries which are themselves the greatest contributors to the problem.

Thus, there should be a global, verified cutoff in the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes and a program for monitoring all existing military stocks and safeguarding all civil stocks. Likewise, an immediate moratorium on programs for the civilian production and use of weapons-usable fissile materials, separated plutonium and highly enriched uranium, with the longer-term goal of a complete ban on the production, stockpiling and use of such material for any purposes including civilian energy or research, along with verified declarations and reductions of existing stocks under international safeguards or possible custody.

We must shift the focus and creative energies of the military and the laboratories in all the nuclear-weapon states to ways of quickly and irreversibly disabling the weapons under multilateral safeguards, and guarding them safely until they can be dismantled. Planning should begin now to safeguard the radioactive residues indefinitely under international supervision.

Only if those of us in the United States act decisively and consistently on such a re-conceptualization can we ask any other countries to forego nuclear weapons altogether, or ask other nuclear-weapon states to restrain their buildup or use of threats, or expect effective international collaboration on enforcement. We cannot hope for any of these so long as we continue to develop new nuclear warheads while we insist on our freedom to threaten and initiate nuclear warfare—"all options are on the table"-- and to maintain massive nuclear arsenals…or in the longer run, any nuclear arsenal at all.

A Commitment to Nuclear Weapons Abolition

It is true that even the most radical disarmament effort cannot uninvent nuclear weapons. It cannot permanently assure that later generations of humans will never resume development and testing of nuclear weapons, once ended. Even physical elimination of all existing weapons, adequately inspected and verified, cannot guarantee that they will never return. The work of the Manhattan Project will not be entirely undone. The danger it bequeathed can never be reduced permanently to zero. Nor can abolition be achieved in one leap; or, ever, simply by demanding or promising it, with no specification of a constructive path toward it.

But these truisms do not mean that anything like the present levels of danger must or should be tolerated any longer: even for another year, let alone indefinitely. In a meaningful sense, near-abolition of nuclear weapons—95-99 percent dismantlement of

current stockpiles—is an appropriate goal to be achieved *within a decade*. Concretely, that would mean that the U.S. and Russia would aim in that time to reduce their arsenals to the neighborhood of the other declared nuclear states—around 500 warheads or less—calling on these others not to increase or modernize their arsenals while awaiting multilateral reductions to lower levels. And they would call on all to make early commitments to seek multilateral ceilings—on the way eventually to a nuclear-weapons-free world—on the order of tens to 100 nuclear weapons.

To be credible enough to avert further proliferation in the short run, the goal of abolition needs not only to be proclaimed at the outset but to be demonstrated immediately by practical steps in that direction, including both progressive reductions and steps to make these reductions irreversible. These must include commitments to *de-alert* and, progressively, deactivate and dismantle warheads and missiles, with bilateral or international monitoring of this process. Both superpowers should move quickly toward "zero alert" for operational missiles and aircraft, taking land-based missiles off alert and adopting zonal and other restrictions on missile submarine patrols and antisubmarine-warfare operations. Steps like these, either unilaterally or bilaterally, could reduce the danger of nuclear war radically in the very short run, weeks to months.

The presumption here is that abolition must come in stages, But if proliferation in the near future is to be averted, a true commitment to total abolition of nuclear weapons--banning and eliminating their use and possession--as the goal is no longer to be delayed or equivocated. We must begin now the effort to explore and to immediately help bring about conditions that will make a world of zero nuclear weapons feasible.

We cannot accept the conclusion that abolition must be ruled out "for the foreseeable future" or put off for generations. There will not be a truly long-run human future without it. In particular, it seems more naïve than realistic to believe that large cities can coexist indefinitely with nuclear weapons. If human civilization in the form that emerged four thousand years ago (in Iraq!) is to persist globally even another century or two, a way must be found to make the required transformations ultimately practical.

The program spelled out above (together with the no-first-use policy discussed below) can be seen as the early and middle stages of the phased elimination of nuclear weapons. It does not assume that any nuclear state is now ready to commit itself to achieving total abolition by a definite deadline. Yet it does represent a belief that quite drastic steps in this direction—going far beyond the current proposals of any nuclear state, to a state that could reasonably be called "near-abolition"—are both urgently desirable and physically possible in the relatively short run.

Whether they are *politically* possible in the world as it is in 2007 is another question. For the immediate future, through 2008, that question can be answered definitely: No. For most of these measures, negotiations toward them are now actively opposed, or

stalemated, by the Bush Administration.[4] The Comprehensive Test Ban remains unratified, and the Antiballistic Missile Ban Treaty rescinded in 2002. Unilateral steps that could reduce nuclear dangers within days or weeks, like de-alerting, are not even considered. All this places an extremely high premium on averting, during that interval, an attack by the Bush administration on Iran, or the occurrence of a new 9-11 in the U.S. Either of these, in my opinion, would launch a dynamic—including a resumption of nuclear testing by the U.S. and thence by many other countries—that would put nuclear disarmament permanently beyond reach.

But the replacement of this administration in 2009 by another, Democrat or Republican, will not, in the light of past experience, make the fundamental changes in U.S. posture that are necessary to prevent widespread nuclear proliferation or use easy to achieve or even likely. Only, possible.

The obstacles to achieving these changes even after the departure of President Bush and Vice President Cheney are not posed by the majority of the American public (or the publics of any of the major nuclear weapons states), but by officials and elites in both parties, and by major institutions supporting militarism and empire.

No First Use

It is not only Bush and other Republicans who are *using* nuclear weapons against Iran at this time– to reinforce threats of military force if Iran does not give up uranium enrichment-- by declaring that "all options are on the table." (All options, for Bush, except direct negotiations, assurances against American attack, expanded trade or diplomatic recognition). Although they would favor broader negotiation, the president has been joined in these expressions of first-use nuclear threats, if diplomacy fails, by each of the now-leading candidates for the Democratic nomination in 2008: Hillary Clinton, John Edwards and Barack Obama.

No major candidate in either party has been willing to undercut the president's "bargaining hand" by insisting that initiating *or threatening* a nuclear attack is not a legitimate "option" for the president of the U.S. or for any other national leader: above all, against a non-nuclear adversary that has not launched an overwhelming attack.

It should be self-evident that a nation that is currently using nuclear weapons for national purposes, and has traditionally defended the legitimacy of doing so, is devoid so long as that persists of any moral authority, or really, much hope of any effective influence of

[4] See the detailed critique of the current status of negotiations in *Nuclear Disorder or Cooperative Security: a Civil Society Assessment of the Final Report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission,* by John Burroughs, Michael Spies, Jacqueline Cabasso, Andrew Lichterman, and Jennifer Nordstrom, copies available from Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy, Michael@lcnp.org.

any kind, toward averting either proliferation or similar use by others. Indeed, it cannot fail to promote both spread and use.

Yet it will take more than a change in administration or party for the U.S. government to join China and most of the non-nuclear states of the world in rejecting the legitimacy of first-use threats or attacks under any circumstances. The opposite of that proposition has been fundamental to U.S. nuclear policy, and to its military policy as a whole, every year since 1945.

Few Americans in or out of government are aware of the extent to which the United States and NATO first-use doctrine has always isolated the United States and its Western allies morally and politically from world opinion. Nor are they familiar with the sharpness of the language used by majorities in the UN General Assembly in resolutions condemning the policies on which NATO has long based its planning.

UN Resolution 36/100, the Declaration on the Prevention of Nuclear Catastrophe, was adopted on December 9, 1981. It declares in its Preamble:

> "Any doctrine allowing the first use of nuclear weapons and any actions pushing the world toward a catastrophe are incompatible with human moral standards and the lofty ideals of the UN."

The body of the UN Resolution 36/100 declares:

> "States and statesmen that resort first to nuclear weapons will be committing the gravest crime against humanity. There will never be any justification or pardon for statesmen who take the decision to be the first to use nuclear weapons."

Eighty two nations voted in favor of this declaration. Forty-one (under heavy pressure from the U.S.) abstained; nineteen opposed it, including the United States and most NATO member nations.

That the dissenters were allies of the United States is no coincidence. The first-use doctrine denounced here in such stark terms underlies the basic strategic concept of NATO, devised and promoted by the United States from the early fifties to the present. (Most Americans, polls show, have been unaware of this). NATO plans and preparations not only "allow" first use of nuclear weapons, if necessary to defeat an overwhelming attack; they promise it. They always have, and they still do.

This remains true despite the fact that the possibility of an overwhelming conventional attack against NATO no longer exists. Eighteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, hundreds of US tactical nuclear weapons remain in Europe to carry out first-use nuclear attacks as a "last resort," although the Warsaw Pact is no more and all its former members, including Russia, have indicated desire for membership in NATO. In 1997, a serious effort to promote consideration of a no-first-use doctrine by Germany—West

Germany was the strongest European supporter of the first-use policy during the Cold War-- was shelved after intense opposition by the United States.

Only China, of the five declared nuclear-weapon states, has made the simple, unqualified commitment that it would never, under any circumstances, be the first to use a nuclear weapon, and that it would not use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear-weapon state. The United States should join China, and call on Russia and other nuclear states to do likewise.

As concrete implementation of this shift (apart from rejecting immediately declarations that "all options" including nuclear first-use "are on the [bargaining] table") the U.S. and Russia should agree to withdraw from deployment all tactical nuclear weapons, seeking a global ban, dismantling both weapons systems and nuclear warheads under bilateral safeguards.

With an era of widespread proliferation threatening, it should be unmistakably clear that accepting UN resolution 36/100 as a universal principle would be in the best interests of the United States and the rest of the world. The United States and its allies would join, at last, in a moral judgment that is already asserted by the majority of governments of the world.

What is at issue here is more than the practical benefits of joining in a consensus. It has been argued above that the United States—along with the other nuclear weapons states—has failed to do remotely as much as it could and must do to motivate and to organize an effective non-proliferation regime. In particular, *none* of these nuclear-weapon states (with the exception of China, on first-use) have been willing--in order to motivate a true international taboo against nuclear acquisition and acceptance of a strong inspection regime--to negotiate the necessary constraints on their own freedom of action to develop, test, deploy and threaten nuclear weapons, The costs of this folly will be measured in otherwise-avoidable regional nuclear wars and nuclear terrorism, the latter potentially threatening all states.

The Moral Cost of Continued Reliance on Nuclear Terrorism

But there is a moral cost, as well, in reliance by the United States and others on threats and readiness to initiate such slaughter by state action. It was suggested earlier that many strategic planners and even many arms control analysts have lost track of the reality of what a nuclear bomb is, and what it does. In the light of that reality, plans and doctrines for the use of nuclear weapons, and resistance to the goal of eliminating them, raise questions about who we are—as a nation, as citizens, as a species—and what we have been doing and risking, what we have a right to do, or an obligation, and what we should not do.

Speaking personally, I have always shared President George W. Bush's blanket condemnation, under all circumstances, of terrorism, defined as the deliberate slaughter of noncombatants—unarmed civilians, children and infants, the old and the sick—for a

political purpose. The destruction of the World Trade Center buildings with their inhabitants on September 11, 2001 was rightly recognized as a terrorist action, and condemned as mass murder, by most of the world.

But in contrast, most Americans have never recognized as terrorist in precisely the same sense the firestorms caused deliberately by U.S. firebombing of Tokyo or Dresden or Hamburg or the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These deliberate massacres of civilians, though not prosecuted after World War II like the Japanese slaughter at Nanking, were by any prior or reasonable criteria war crimes, wartime terrorism, crimes against humanity,

Just like the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki —which would be considered, in terms of scale, tactical nuclear weapons today —any attack by a single tactical nuclear weapon near a densely populated area would kill tens to hundreds of thousands of noncombatants, as those did.

Virtually any threat of first-use of a nuclear weapon is a terrorist threat. (Exceptions might be tactical anti-submarine weapons underwater, or weapons in space, or air-bursts against military targets in a desert: but even these would be highly likely to lead to less discriminating exchanges). Any nation making such threats—that means the United States and its allies, including Israel, along with Russia, Pakistan and India—is a terrorist nation.

But the same is true of threats of nuclear retaliation to nuclear attack. To threaten second-use—above all with thermonuclear weapons, like the five permanent members of the Security Council-- is to threaten counter-terrorism on the largest of scales: retaliatory genocide. To possess a nuclear weapon is to be a terrorist nation.

To reject terrorism—as we should, as moral beings---is to reject the possession of nuclear weapons. The elimination of nuclear weapons, of nuclear terrorism, will have to be accomplished by multilateral collaboration. But it must be accomplished. To recover fundamental moral bearings, as well as to preserve life and civilization, the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea must cease to be terrorist states.

The challenge especially to citizens of these states, in company with others around the world, is to bring their national policies into line—overcoming the resistance of their present national leaderships—with fundamental morality, and thus with the global goal, the species-task, defined by the then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his inaugural address to the NPT Review and Extension Conference in May 1995:

"The most safe, sure and swift way to deal with the threat of nuclear arms is to do away with them in every regard. This should be our vision of the future. No more testing. No more production. No more sales or transfer. Reduction and destruction of all nuclear weapons and the means to make them should be humanity's great cause."